

**Guidance Regarding Curriculum Content**  
**(Required for CBAE grantees as of FY 2006.)**

All aspects of the proposed program must be consistent with the definition of abstinence education pursuant to A-H of Section 510(b)(2) of the Social Security Act. Additionally, successful applicants must adequately address each of the elements within the "Scope" section of this program announcement as indicated below.

**Required Content:**

- A curriculum must contain material consistent with the A-H elements.
- ACF will evaluate all proposed curricula, supplemental materials, and proposed or anticipated modifications to the curricula to assure compliance with the 13 themes outlined below. This review will include a content analysis to determine whether at least 70 percent of the material directly relates to the 13 themes and that each theme is adequately addressed.
- No one theme should be over- or under-represented in the entire curriculum.
- Curriculum must not contain any material inconsistent with any of the A-H elements.
- Material must not promote contraception and/or condom use (as opposed to risk elimination).
- A curriculum must not promote or encourage sexual activity outside of marriage.
- A curriculum must not promote or encourage the use of any type of contraceptives outside of marriage or refer to abstinence as a form of contraception.
- Curriculum must be age-appropriate with regard to the developmental stage of the intended audience. Graphic images of genitalia for purposes of illustrating the effects of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are inappropriate for certain age groups, especially if classes are not gender separated.

**Additional Guidance Regarding Curriculum Content:**

- Abstinence curricula must have a clear definition of sexual abstinence which must be consistent with the following: "Abstinence means

voluntarily choosing not to engage in sexual activity until marriage. Sexual activity refers to any type of genital contact or sexual stimulation between two persons including, but not limited to, sexual intercourse."

- The curriculum must have a clear message regarding the importance of student abstinence from sexual activity until marriage and must emphasize that the best life outcomes are more likely obtained if an individual abstains until marriage.
- The term "resources" must refer to all materials to be used in the submitted curriculum.
- Throughout the entire curriculum, the term "marriage" must be defined as "only a legal union between one man and one woman as a husband and wife, and the word 'spouse' refers only to a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or a wife." (Consistent with Federal law)
- The curriculum must teach the psychological and physical benefits of sexual abstinence-until-marriage for youth.
- The curriculum must teach the importance of marriage, commitment, responsible parenthood, especially fatherhood, and the potential harm of out-of-wedlock childbearing to all racial, socioeconomic, geographic, age, gender and ethnic groups.
- Information on contraceptives, if included, must be age-appropriate and presented only as it supports the abstinence message being presented. Curriculum must not promote or endorse, distribute or demonstrate the use of contraception or instruct students in contraceptive usage.
- The following National Institute of Allergies and Infectious Diseases definition for STDs must be applied throughout the document:

*"A sexually transmitted disease is any contagious disease that is transmitted through direct person to person sexual contact. Sexually transmitted diseases are contracted through exchange of semen, blood, or any other body fluids or by direct sexual contact with the affected body area of an individual who has a sexually transmitted disease."*

### **Successful Abstinence Education Curriculum**

***A. It is essential that the abstinence education curriculum has as its exclusive purpose, teaching the social, psychological, and health gains to be realized by abstaining from sexual activity.***

The curriculum must be consistent with the bulleted examples.

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- has as its exclusive purpose to teach abstinence. Every element, goal, and objective of the curriculum must be consistent with the abstinence-until-marriage message. The curriculum must teach abstinence in preparation for marriage throughout.
- Teaches the social gains realized by abstaining from non-marital sexual activity. (Included in themes D1, D2, F1, and F2.)
- Teaches the psychological gains realized by abstaining from non-marital sexual activity. (Included in themes B1, B2, D1, D2, and E1.)
- Teaches the health gains realized by abstaining from non-marital sexual activity. (Included in themes B1, B2, C2, and E2.)

***B. It is critical that the abstinence education curriculum teaches abstinence from sexual activity outside marriage as the expected standard for all school-aged children:***

The curriculum must adequately address each of the themes below and be consistent with the bulleted examples.

**Theme B1.** Teaches that abstinence from sexual activity is the expected standard for all school-age children.

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- Teaches that abstinence from sexual activity is the expected standard for school-age children.
- Teaches that pursuing the expected standard of abstinence serves to establish an understanding of and respect for others.
- Teaches that committed caring relationships require respect for others, their feelings and their bodies.
- Teaches that abstinence reflects qualities of personal integrity and is honorable.

**Theme B2.** Teaches, in an age-appropriate manner, the topic of returning to abstinence, that teens who have engaged in non-marital sexual activity may abstain from further non-marital sexual activity, thereby reducing potential negative psychological, health, and social consequences.

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- Teaches that teens who have been sexually active may choose to return to abstinence.
- Teaches that teens who choose abstinence, even after they have been sexually active, are likely to improve their future well-being.

***C. Abstinence education curriculum must teach that abstinence from sexual activity is the only certain way to avoid out-of-wedlock pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and other associated health problems.***

The curriculum must adequately address each of the themes below and be consistent with the bulleted examples.

**Theme C1.** Teaches, in an age-appropriate manner, that abstinence is the only certain way to avoid out-of-wedlock pregnancy.

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- Teaches that contraception may fail to prevent teen pregnancy and that sexually active teens using contraception may become pregnant.
- Teaches the published failure rates associated with contraceptives relative to pregnancy prevention, including "real use" versus trial or "laboratory use," human error, product defect, teen use and possible side effects of contraceptives. (References for information must be provided with the curriculum.)
- Does not promote or encourage the use or combining of any contraceptives in order to make sex "safer."

**Theme C2.** Teaches, in an age-appropriate manner, that abstinence is the only certain way to avoid the sexual transmission of STDs and related health problems. Teaches the harmful physical effects of infection by STDs that may result from sexual activity outside of the context of faithful marriage. Teaches the physical health gains realized by abstaining from sexual activity. (This theme is limited to STDs; the physical effects of out-of-wedlock pregnancy are covered in themes F1 and F2.)

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- Teaches the epidemiology of STDs in the U.S., e.g., infection rates, modes of transmission, existence of incurable and potentially fatal STDs. (References for information must be provided with the curriculum.)
- Teaches the limitations of contraception to consistently prevent STDs.

- Teaches that sexually active teens increase the risk of contracting an STD with each additional sex partner.
- Teaches the adverse physical, emotional and socio-economic consequences associated with contracting an STD.
- Teaches that acquiring an STD may potentially impact future relationships.
- Teaches that abstinence decreases the potential for experiencing other associated health problems (e.g., infertility, chronic pelvic pain, liver disease, certain reproductive organ cancers, HIV/AIDS).
- Teaches the increased biological susceptibility to STD infection associated with earlier age of initiation of sexual activity.

***D. It is required that the abstinence education curriculum teaches that a mutually faithful monogamous relationship in the context of marriage is the expected standard of human sexual activity.***

The curriculum must adequately address each of the themes below and be consistent with the bulleted examples.

**Theme D1.** Teaches that the expected standard for sexual activity is within the context of a mutually monogamous marriage relationship between a man and a woman. Teaches that healthy human sexuality involves enduring fidelity, love and commitment; human happiness and well-being are associated with a stable, loving marriage. Teaches that non-marital sex can undermine the capacity for healthy marriage, love and commitment. Teaches that abstinence is beneficial in preparation for successful marriage and significantly increases the probability of a happy, healthy marriage.

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- Teaches that non-marital sex in teen years may reduce the probability of a stable, happy marriage as an adult.
- Teaches that healthy human sexuality involves enduring fidelity, love and commitment.
- Teaches that teen abstinence may increase the probability of a healthy marriage.
- Teaches that teen non-marital sex may not evolve into an intimate enduring relationship.
- Teaches that sex can be fulfilling when practiced within the intimacy, love and commitment of marriage.

**Theme D2.** Teaches that human sexuality includes deep emotional and psychological aspects and is not merely physical in nature.

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- Teaches that mutual faithfulness, intimacy and commitment within marriage can lead to increased human happiness.
- Teaches that premarital sexual activity can create a pattern of relationship instability.
- Teaches the difference between love and sex.
- Teaches the stages of emotional intimacy and bonding.
- Teaches that sexual activity exclusively within marriage usually serves to promote healthy emotional bonding.
- Teaches that the lack of commitment associated with non-marital sex may increase the potential for emotional harm.
- Teaches that males and females may view sex, intimacy, and commitment differently.
- Provides an understanding that non-marital teenage sexual activity may harm others.
- Teaches the short-term and unstable nature of many teen sexual relationships.

***E. It is essential that the abstinence education curriculum teaches that sexual activity outside of the context of marriage is likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects.***

The curriculum must adequately address each of the themes below and be consistent with the bulleted examples.

**Theme E1.** Teaches the harmful psychological effects of sexual activity outside the context of marriage. Teaches the psychological gains realized by abstaining from sexual activity.

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- Teaches the potential psychological effects (e.g., depression and suicide) associated with adolescent sexual activity.
- Teaches that abstinence can increase the freedom to fulfill age-appropriate, psycho-social, developmental stages.

- Teaches the harmful psychological effects that can be associated with experiencing relationship failure, especially if sexual intimacy was experienced before marriage.
- Teaches that abstinence may increase the freedom to enjoy emotional health by lessening the likelihood of experiencing the negative emotions that can be associated with a decision to become involved in premarital sexual activity.

**Theme E2.** Teaches that teen sexual activity may have harmful effects in addition to the effects previously mentioned in C1, C2, and E1. Teaches that abstinence can help youth to avoid these potentially harmful effects.

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- Teaches that teen sexual activity is associated with decreased school completion, decreased educational attainment, and decreased income potential.
- Teaches that teens who are sexually active are also more likely to engage in other risk behaviors such as: smoking, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, violence, and crime.

***F. It is critical that the abstinence education curriculum teaches that bearing children out-of-wedlock is likely to have harmful consequences for the child, the child's parents, and society.***

The curriculum must adequately address each of the themes below and be consistent with the bulleted examples.

**Theme F1.** Teaches that sexual activity outside of marriage may result in non-marital pregnancy. Teaches, in an age-appropriate manner, that bearing children out-of-wedlock may have harmful consequences for the child. Teaches that by abstaining from non-marital sexual activity, teens will have increased potential to form healthy marriages that will benefit their future children.

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- Teaches that teen sexual abstinence will decrease the probability of out-of-wedlock child bearing and improve preparation for stable marriage.
- Teaches that marriage may greatly improve the well-being of children.
- Teaches that a healthy marriage will significantly decrease the likelihood that one's children will experience: physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse or neglect; welfare dependence; poverty; drug or

alcohol abuse; emotional and behavioral problems; academic failure; and incarceration.

- Teaches that the earlier the initiation of non-marital sexual activity, the greater the probability of out-of-wedlock pregnancy and birth.

**Theme F2.** Teaches the potential beneficial effects of marriage to the well-being of adults and society. Teaches, in an age-appropriate manner, that bearing children out-of-wedlock is likely to have harmful consequences for the child's parents and society as a whole.

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- Teaches the multi-faceted benefits of healthy marriage to our society (e.g., increased life span; higher standards of living; higher levels of sexual satisfaction).
- Teaches that bearing children out-of-wedlock increases the likelihood that a mother will live in poverty, become dependent on welfare, and/or experience significant delays in or interference with achieving desired life goals.
- Teaches that adults who are married are less likely to be involved in illegal activity, abuse substances or spend time in prison.
- Teaches that bearing children out-of-wedlock is associated with increased rates of depression, domestic violence, and failed relationships.
- Teaches that bearing children out-of-wedlock can result in an increased potential for government expenditures and can have negative effects on society (e.g., increased services for non-marital parents and children, higher medical costs, higher rates of crime, incarceration and/or academic failure).
- Teaches the importance of marriage to economic well-being and prosperity and the importance of abstinence in the teen years to long-term healthy and happy marriages.
- Teaches the association between healthy marriage and adult happiness.
- Teaches the relationship of abstinence before marriage and fidelity in marriage to responsible parenthood.
- Teaches the importance of marriage to responsible fatherhood.



- Teaches that males who father children out-of-wedlock may face substantial child support payments for the next 18 years and other legal obligations.

***G. Abstinence education curriculum must teach young people how to reject sexual advances and how alcohol and drug use increase vulnerability to sexual advances.***

The curriculum must adequately address each of the themes below and be consistent with the bulleted examples.

**Theme G1.** Teaches the importance of goal setting and future-oriented thinking as a means of promoting sexual abstinence. Teaches the importance of personal character in deciding to remain sexually abstinent. Teaches the value of building and maintaining healthy relationships that are free from sexual involvement.

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- Teaches that sexual desires are natural and controllable and that individuals are capable of making choices to abstain from sexual activity.
- Teaches the value of building and maintaining healthy relationships that are free from sexual involvement.
- Identifies role models for success and examples of healthy sexual values.
- Teaches that being sexually active does not prove one is mature, successful or popular.
- Teaches the importance of personal character and self-discipline in deciding to remain sexually abstinent.
- Teaches skills for improving risk assessment, healthy decision making, refusal skills and self-discipline concerning sexual activity.
- Enhances future orientation, helping the young person who has chosen abstinence to develop and implement long-term life goals for themselves as individuals.
- Enhances a sense of personal efficacy, creating a strong personal understanding that significant life goals are personally attainable and that current conduct can lead to goal attainment.
- Teaches that abstinence is a means of developing discipline, self-awareness, and goal-setting behaviors.

- Teaches that the expected standard of abstinence provides guidelines for decision-making and/or goal-setting behaviors.

**Theme G2.** Teaches techniques and skills to help young people reject sexual advances and maintain the expected standard of abstinence.

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- Enhances sense of personal efficacy in students that they can, as individuals, adhere to abstinence standards.
- Teaches examples of verbal and non-verbal responses designed to stop sexual advances.
- Provides skills for maintaining independent personal standards regarding abstinence and for resisting negative peer influences.
- Teaches how to set and communicate boundaries and avoid settings and circumstances commonly associated with an increased likelihood of sexual advances (e.g., staying out late, being alone with a date in an unsupervised setting, attending parties where sexually active peers are likely to attend).
- Teaches how to avoid settings that involve potential interaction with pornography (e.g., explicit movies, TV, magazines, Internet).
- Provides understanding of media influence on sexual behavior and skills for resisting negative media influences.
- Teaches students to ask for help from parents and adults who can support and reinforce abstinence-until-marriage decisions.

**Theme G3.** Teaches that the use of drugs or alcohol can increase one's vulnerability to sexual advances (including sexual exploitation or violence). Teaches skills for avoiding high-risk situations where sexual activity is more likely.

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- Teaches that alcohol and/or drug use can decrease self-control, lower levels of inhibitions, and adversely influence decisions regarding sexual behavior.
- As a means of promoting sexual abstinence, encourages participation in age-appropriate activities that do not involve the use of alcohol and/or drugs.

- Teaches techniques for refusing to participate in alcohol, tobacco and drug use.
- Teaches that abstinence increases the potential of avoiding other high-risk behaviors, e.g., drug abuse, alcohol abuse, tobacco use and sexual violence.
- Explains how situations or circumstances associated with alcohol, drug abuse or other high-risk behaviors can contribute to the increased likelihood of encountering sexual advances.

***H. It is required that the abstinence education curriculum teaches the importance of attaining self-sufficiency before engaging in sexual activity.***

The curriculum must be consistent with the bulleted example.

- Teaches the relationship between self-sufficiency and abstinence-until-marriage. Teaches that the delay of the initiation of sexual activity until marriage can significantly improve life outcomes, financial well-being and marital stability. Included in themes B1, B2, D1, D2, F1, and F2.